DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 424 680 EA 029 459

AUTHOR Moller, Jorunn
TITLE The Norwegian Principal: The Impact of National and Local Culture.
PUB DATE 1998-04-00
NOTE 30p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (San Diego, CA, April 13-17, 1998).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Administrator Attitudes; Cultural Context; *Cultural Influences; Educational Environment; Foreign Countries; *Instructional Leadership; *Principals; School Administration; *School Culture; Secondary Education
IDENTIFIERS *Norway

ABSTRACT

This article provides a snapshot of educational administration and leadership in Norway. The article describes the Norwegian context and the country's educational system. It reports on a small study that was part of a cross-cultural exploration into the principalship, offering a discussion based on interviews of principals from four upper-secondary schools: Soltun, Borgen, Granlien, and Stranda. Each school is briefly described, followed by a synopsis of the principals' typical day, their management styles, their relationships with individuals and groups, how they deal with uncertainty and conflict, and their thoughts on being a male or female principal. The report identifies and highlights some aspects of principalships that may be related partly to Norwegian culture in general and to the local history and established traditions of the single school in particular. The analysis is framed by cultural dimensions developed by Geert Hofstede's study of cultural influences on management in the private sector. Results show that none of the principals felt too much stress. The findings reveal the difficulty in attributing impacts on principalship to national culture. (RJM)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 424 680

Jorunn Møller, Department of Teacher Education and School Development
University of Oslo, P.O.Box 1099, Blindern, 0316 Oslo
phone: (+47) 22 85 76 18, fax: (+47) 22 85 48 71, e-mail: jorunn.moller@ils.uio.no

THE NORWEGIAN PRINCIPAL - THE IMPACT OF NATIONAL AND LOCAL CULTURE

Paper (draft version) presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Diego, April 13-17, 1998

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
J. Møller
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

EA 029 459

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Jorunn Møller, Department of Teacher Education and School Development
University of Oslo, P.O.Box 1099, Blindern, 0316 Oslo
phone: (+47) 22 85 76 18, fax: (+47) 22 85 48 71, e-mail: jorunn.moller@ils.uio.no

THE NORWEGIAN PRINCIPAL - THE IMPACT OF NATIONAL AND LOCAL CULTURE

Paper (draft version) presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Diego, April 13-17, 1998

The article provides a snapshot of educational administration and leadership in Norway. The first part of the article is a description of the Norwegian context and educational system. The second part is a report of a small study which is part of a cross-cultural exploration into the principalship. The discussion is based on qualitative data from the principals of four upper secondary schools in Norway. This study does not claim that the reflections made by these four principals, are representative for Norwegian principals as a whole. Nor does their description of the local school's culture give a complete picture since the teachers and students were not interviewed. The data is grounded in the principals' perceptions. Nevertheless it does identify and highlight some aspects of principalship which may be related partly to Norwegian culture in general, partly to the local history and established traditions of the single school. Cultural dimensions developed by Geert Hofstede (1980) from his study of cultural influences on management in the private sector is used as a main framework for analysis. Individual personality and biography will of course also influence the way principals understand and conduct their roles, but this is not discussed in the article. As a consequence the patterns emerging from the four case studies should be viewed cautiously.

A Short Introduction to a Norwegian Context

The term «Scandinavia» is often used to identify the region which Norway is part of, and the Scandinavian region has some distinguishing features among which the model of the welfare state is foremost. The policy has intended to create equitable life conditions for all social groups, regardless of social background, gender, ethnicity and geographical location (cf. Tjeldvoll 1997).

Norway is comparable in size to Britain, but its population density is one of the lowest in Europe, and the population is largely homogeneous. Recently there have been changes due to immigration from Third World countries, but compared to other European nations, the Norwegian immigration policy is rather strict. Approximately 85 % of the Norwegian population are members of the Lutheran State Church. The country has only 4 million inhabitants, and there is a large degree of social and economic equality. Only about 6 % of the labor force works in farming, forestry, or fisheries, and most people live in towns. Although half the population is concentralted in the counties adjoining the Oslo fjord, there is broad political agreement on maintaining a dispersed population patterns. Educational institutions are an important factor in ensuring its survival, and the value is placed on small schools, even in urban settings. About 85 - 90 % of students stay in school until at least age eighteen. It is

EA 029 459

probably the many small, local communities that give Norwegian society its distinctive character.

The cultural and linguistic gap between the urban elite and the rural population was not great in Norway compared to other countries in the 19th century, but in Norway this gap became politically important through populist politics. Teachers often played the role of agitators and local leaders in these populist movements, and it was not unusual for the teacher to be a farmer on the side. To establish and run primary schools was from the beginning a local responsibility in Norway. People living in the countryside were consistently hostile to the state bureaucracy, seeking to curb its authority and cut its pay. The rural populist tradition is closely identified with Norwegian nationalism and its democratic character. The traits of populism imply that government must be 'close to the people' (Lauglo 1990:74). The populism influence on culture may help to explain why resistance to joining the European Union is so strong in Norway (cf. Lauglo 1997). In 1994 a vote on whether Norway should join the European Union yielded the same result as a 1972 vote on the same issue: 52 % voted no. Only in Oslo and some nearby counties did the majority of voters favor membership.

In close accord with the populist tradition there are very small population units of local government, ranging down to municipalities with only 3000 inhabitants, and small schools are strongly favored in Norway. Voluntary organizations and local newspapers receive considerable subsidies. The Labor party (Social Democratic) held power with two short breaks, from 1935 to 1981 and has during the postwar period influenced educational policy a lot. The Norwegian welfare state model was developed during these years, and it is based on a strong and expansive state, and economic development in the postwar period allowed for rapid expansion. The expansion of education was linked to the increased demand for educated workers. Economic growth and full employment have been important political goals. Compared to other European countries the unemployment rate is low. This year it is approximately 4 %. Offshore oil and gas resources are providing a substantial contribution to national income. Since 1981 minority governments have been formed alternately by the Labor Party and the center/right-wing parties.

The welfare state model is now under attack from many fronts, and the market alternative in education is set on the political agenda. Right-wing parties would like to see more private schools receiving state support at all levels, to give state-maintained school more competition. They wish to give pupils freedom of choice among schools. However, so far it is more talk than action. But in the future Norwegian education will probably see more differentiation and more privatization. There may be a deterioration of some public schools, and an emerging market for private schools (cf. Tjeldvoll 1997).

Even though decentralized governing has been praised, schools have worked to a fairly detailed curriculum guidelines in terms of timetable and syllabuses, and with central approval of textbooks. Since the early 1970s these specifications have been replaced by looser guidelines from the center. However, in the 90s curriculum guidelines have become more detailed again.

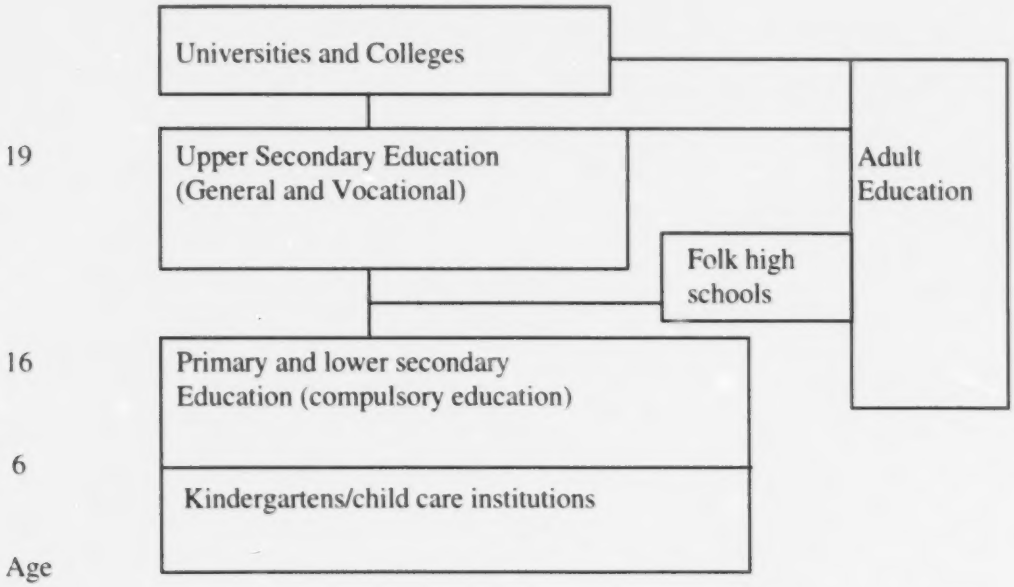
The Educational System in Norway - An Overview

National objectives for education stress the importance of providing equal access to education regardless of domicile, sex, social or cultural background and aptitude. All children irrespective of physical or mental disability or learning difficulties, are as far as possible incorporated into

the ordinary school system. There is no streaming according to abilities, gender or other factors. All public education in Norway is free, including tertiary education. Education shall be based on fundamental Christian and humanistic values. It is stated in the national curriculum guidelines that education should uphold and renew the Norwegian cultural heritage to provide perspective and guidance for the future.

There are three main levels in the educational system:
1. compulsory school[1] (ages 6-13 and lower secondary, ages 13-16);
2. upper secondary education, including apprenticeship training (ages 16-19);
3. tertiary education: colleges and universities.

Fig. 1: The Norwegian Education System.



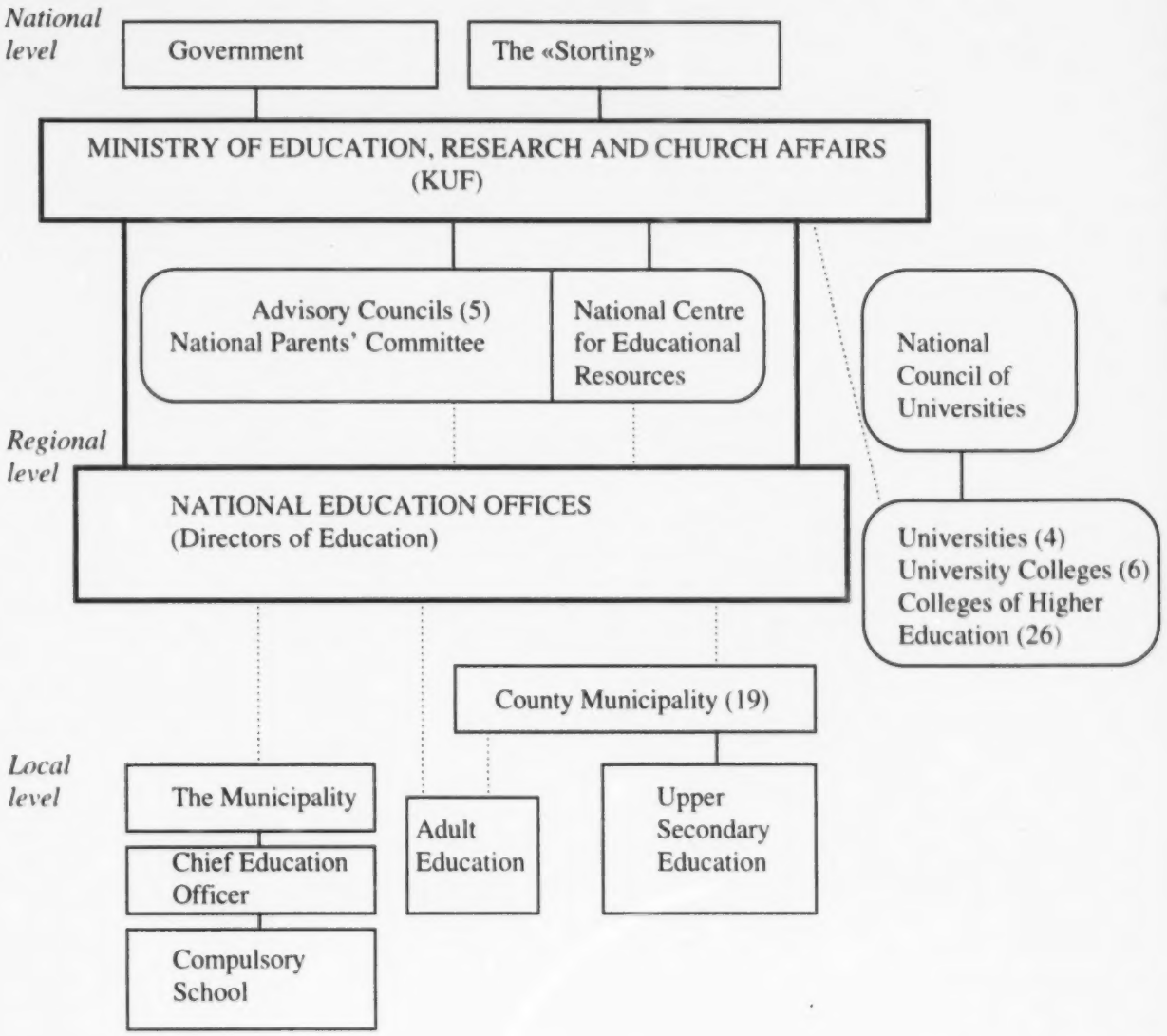
The private sector in Norwegian education is small (1,6 % of pupils in compulsory school, and about 4 % in upper secondary). Private schools are regarded as a supplement to state schools rather than as competitors. Most of the private schools are based on a particular religious denomination or philosophy of life. As a rule private schools receive a grant that covers 85 % of the running costs.

In Norway the National Assembly, the «Storting», has the legislative power and the overall responsibility for education. The Storting consequently sets the principal objectives of education and the frames of its administrative structure. The Government exerts its authority in matters of education through *the Ministry of Education, Research and Church Affairs.* This ministry covers all levels of education from primary and secondary to higher education, including adult education and Norwegian research policy. Pre-school education or child care institutions are the responsibility of *the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs.* Norway is

[1] The National Assembly (Stortinget) recently decided to lower the school starting age to six in 1997, and to extend the period of compulsory schooling to ten years instead of nine.

divided into 19 counties, the administrative units of the regions, and 454 municipalities. The counties have the responsibility for providing *upper secondary education.* The municipalities have the responsibility for the running of the *primary and lower secondary schools.* In higher education the administrative responsibility has to a great extent been delegated to the individual universities and institutions.

Fig. 2: Organization of Norwegian Education: Responsible bodies

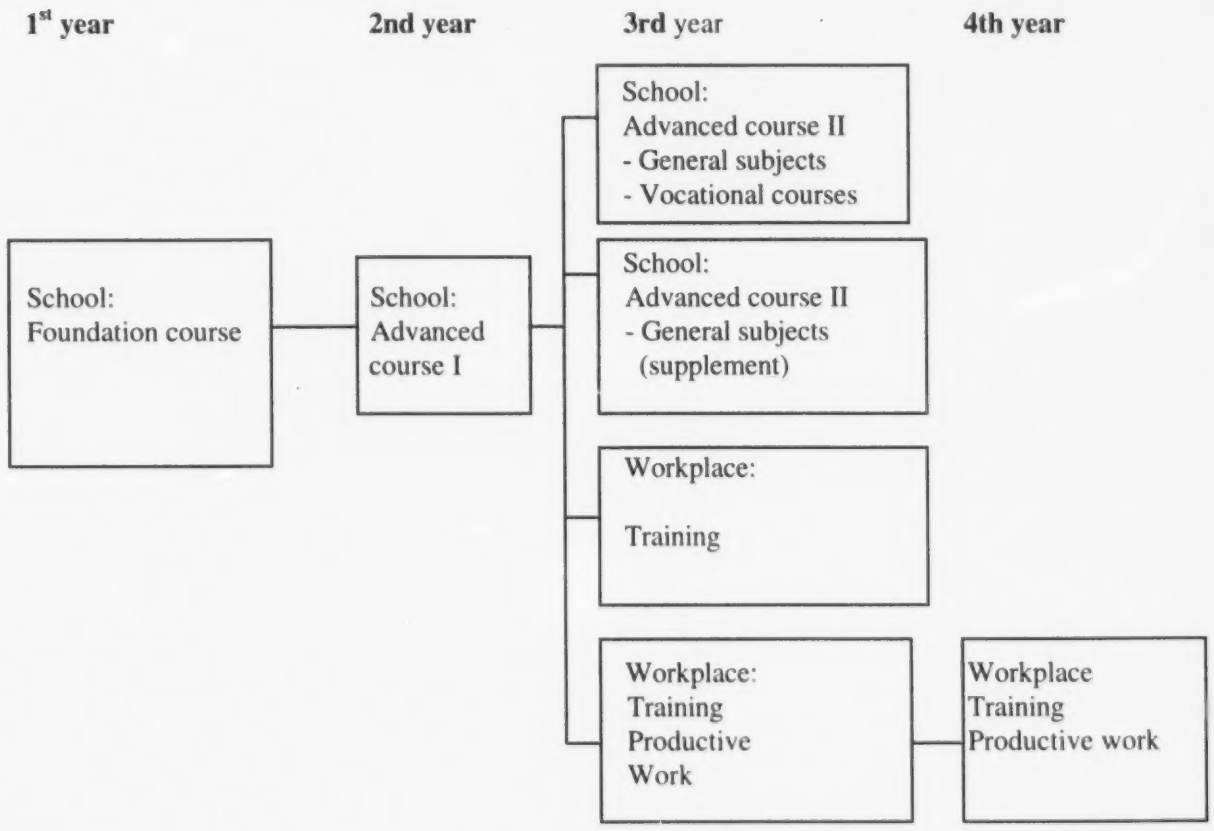


As it is considered important that children should attend school without having to leave their families, there are a large number of small schools in remote and sparsely populated areas. Approximately 1200 primary schools have more than one age group in each class. Some of these schools have less than six students. The maximum number of students in one class is 28 at primary school and 30 at secondary school.

During the primary stage no achievement grades (marks) are given to students. Twice a year the parents have consultations with teachers where they are given an informal report on student progress. The students are encouraged to be present at these consultations. Grades (marks) are given at the lower secondary level. At the end of year 9 there is a public exam covering the main subjects: Norwegian, mathematics and English. To some degree marks will decide which upper secondary school and particularly which course students may attend. As a rule students usually attend the upper secondary school closest to their homes. However, not so in Oslo, where the right wing government has introduced a competition among schools some years ago. An analysis of Norwegian secondary schools shows that they have long been less exclusively geared to university entry than their European counterparts, and vocational courses often have higher minimum entrance requirements than the general education track (Lauglo 1997).

The comprehensive upper secondary school offering a broad range of subjects, practical and theoretical, has become the norm in the 90s. The current program of reform provides, among other changes, a statutory right for all young people between 16 and 19 to three years of post-compulsory education, leading to a craft certificate and/or study at an institution of higher education. The basic structure of upper secondary education is: Foundation Course (1 st year) followed by Advanced Course I (2nd year) and Advanced Course II (3rd year).

Fig. 3: Typical structure of upper secondary education and training (from 1994)



The Foundation Course has a common core of general subjects. Under the system being introduced in 1994 applicants to upper secondary schools must be given a place on one of three Foundation Courses chosen by themselves. Advanced courses imply more specialization. The basic model for vocational training is two years of theoretical and practical training at school followed by one or two years of more practical training at the workplace.

School Leadership in Norway

Each school is run by a *principal* (head), assisted by vice-principals (deputy heads). The number of deputy heads is depending on the number of students. In addition there is a coordinating committee on which are represented the parents, the teachers, the students and the remaining staff. In most of the primary schools the job as a principal is a combination of being a teacher and a principal. How many lessons a week the principal will teach, are depending on the number of students in school. If for instance a school has 200 students, the principal will have to teach approximately 10 hours a week in addition to administrative duties. In upper secondary schools the principal will not have teaching duties, but deputy heads will normally teach 30 % of their job.

Running an upper secondary school is a complex task. Therefore, it is usual to consider the management as a team effort, with numerous members of staff fulfilling different administrative roles, (White Paper no. 37, 1990-91). The larger the organization, the more important it is to distribute administrative duties. The position of faculty head was established to help the teachers and head coordinate teaching activities within each faculty. Responsibilities included coordinating department meetings, promoting subject/pedagogical collaboration among teachers, supervising the preparation of internal examinations, initiating work placement contacts and coordinating budget plans and faculty purchases. In practice, the tasks have primarily been administrative. An award of the 29th March 1996 led to a decentralization of internal organization. Schools were given greater freedom to appoint faculty heads. At some schools, this resulted in a reduction of faculty heads, whereas at other schools, it resulted in an increase in number.

In the Norwegian context neither external nor internal accountability issues have emerged on the agenda until recently. It is almost impossible to terminate a teacher's or a principal's contract unless they are proven guilty of illegal activities that relate to their post. There has been a strong norm of non-interference in the teacher's classroom activities, and autonomy is part of the tradition in upper secondary schools. The teachers decide individually or in collaboration with colleagues how to deliver the national curriculum. However, the curriculum guidelines emphasize collaborative efforts among teachers. Trust in teachers' work has for long been a tacid dimension in principals' approach to leadership, or maybe in reality it has to do with accepted zones of influence.

This can probably be related to the history of teaching in Norway. During the period from the late decades in the 19th century to the early 1970s, teachers had high status, and teaching attracted the brightest people, especially in rural areas. Principals were recruited from this group, and being a principal in Norwegian compulsory schools has historically been linked to housekeeping and maintaining order. When principals and teachers discuss, they talk about ad hoc problems like student discipline or parental complaints, rather than curriculum policies or anything else related to instructional efforts. But now teacher autonomy is under attack from

many fronts. Politicians seem to think external control of teaching is the means to ensure quality in schools, and the Ministry is developing a model for national evaluation.

Preparation for principalship and in-service-training

Norwegian principals do not have to participate in a formal preparation program of school administration to become a school leader. Neither do we have a system of apprenticeship with an experienced and competent administrator. To hold an administrative position in schools, one must have three years teaching experience and formal teacher training. An upper secondary school teacher's education is primarily in their specialized teaching subject(s) and not pedagogy. The majority of upper secondary school teachers have six months practical pedagogical education[2], in addition to their five to seven years of their specialized subject studies. This is the case for most of those who apply for principalship at upper secondary schools, and this is the background of the respondents of this study.

Having once secured the position, principals are offered 6-12 days a year of in-service training. At county level further education courses for school administrators are often based upon general management and administration strategies used in the private sector. As Røvik (1992 & 1998) points out, in his report about modernization within the public sector, the same solutions are applied in both public and private sectors, and in large and small companies. If an organization is to prove its worth, it must be seen to incorporate the latest administrative strategies. In these courses the key management concepts for the 1990s seem to be total quality management and quality assurance, and stem from economic theory rather than educational theory. As a result the gap between administration and teaching seems to be emphasized. The administration team identify to a larger degree with new constructs of educational leaders as managing directors.

But the Ministry for Educational Research and Church Affairs has outlined competence objectives for educational leadership within schools, as part of the administrative program. These will include educational politics, curricula theory, evaluation and advisory topics. This may produce a new way of thinking (KUF 1996). This type of knowledge is equally important for all teachers as it is for administrators, but it will take more than a few, brief courses before it is firmly established. So far that seems more like a vision for the future.

A Context of Restructuring

The Norwegian education model is currently challenged by several ideological changes. During the 1980s the welfare state model gradually was set under pressure. The policy was directed towards more decentralization of political and economic responsibility from the center to the periphery. The main arguments were based on that greater decentralization would mobilize resources that were not available under more centralized conditions, and that decentralized systems could utilize available resources more efficiently[3]. A major step in this direction was made in 1986 by the introduction of a new sector grant system. The former earmarking of grants to education was then replaced by a system where local and regional authorities receive

---

2 In 1993 it was changed to one year practical/pedagogical program.

3 Alternative conceptions have to do with more serious challenges with which the modern state has to cope: the increase in conflict and the loss of legitimacy (cf. Weiler 1990).

a lump sum covering all central government subsidies for school education and culture as well as the health service. The intention was to give local authorities more autonomy and make local priorities as regards the use of resources in various sectors. The argument was not only about improving the quality of the output, but also about making better use of available resources. A new model for research and development in school was introduced simultaneously. The National Council for Innovation in Education was disbanded in 1984, and the new model placed most of the responsibility for the work on local needs and local initiative. The intention was that the schools themselves should take responsibility for projects and run them. At the same time there was a continuous struggle between political and professional power over education. In moving from central control towards more local control the question of who has the responsibility, was sharpened.

In the beginning of the 1990s another shift occurred in educational policy. People outside schools require more control and more external evaluation. This criticism of education seems to reinforce the belief in the possibility of a rational planned educational system. A key word in these reforms is still decentralization, though parts of the reforms can be identified as centralization (Karlsen 1993). It depends on which changes you are focusing, from which perspective you analyze the changes, and how you understand the sum of efforts towards restructuring

The various reforms which have been launched in the 1990s are mainly structural reforms aiming at a consolidation of the system and reforms of the content of education from primary stage to higher education (KUF 1994b) The reforms can be summarized as follows:

- Reorganization of the management of the education sector put into effect in 1992;
- Reform of upper secondary education (Reform 1994), including the legal right to three years of upper secondary education for all young people between 16 and 19 years of age;
- Reform of compulsory education, including the lowering of the school starting age to six and extension of compulsory schooling to ten years instead of nine (Reform 1997);
- Structural reforms in special education;
- Consolidation of the system of higher education aiming at linking institutions of higher education together in an integrated «Network Norway» and creating a structural framework for increased cooperation and communication among the institutions.

In Parliamentary Report No. 37 (1990-91) "On Organization and Guidance in the Educational Sector" the policy statements towards restructuring of schools were outlined. Management by objectives, adjusted to the school as an organization, was said to be a central principle of governance. Thus the Ministry of Education, Research and Church Affairs will continue decentralizing the regulation of education by rules and by giving the local authorities more autonomy and better possibilities to plan their economy. But at the same time the Ministry will centralize the control of goals by means of a new national curriculum where the goals are more clearly articulated, and tied to a national assessment program. A new curriculum reform for upper secondary as well as for primary and lower secondary school has been launched. The principal is given increased formal power and is placed in a key role in implementing the curriculum and the assessment program. The new role demands a more active participation on issues concerning classroom practices, demands more supervisory activities, and puts more emphasis on the employer role. In White Papers from the Government it seems to be a strong belief that better leadership and assessment in school are «keys» to school improvement and to implementing new national curriculum guidelines. But contradictions are detectable. In national

curriculum guidelines, school democracy and teacher professionalism are emphasized. The teacher seems to be the «key» to school improvement.

When examining the reform-initiatives, they seem to be driven by concerns for effectiveness, productivity and accountability, and there is a tendency is to exert control over teachers' work and teachers' time. The curriculum guidelines are for instance a lot more detailed compared to the guidelines introduced in 1987 for primary and lower secondary schools. The Ministry are also producing small text books, «guides», for several areas in order to underline *how to meet challenges*. In order words, the principle «management by objectives» is followed up from central level with detailed descriptions of how to do things.

The job as a principal has become much more demanding and challenging, but the devolution to self managing schools has been accompanied by centralizing tendencies. This could explain why recruitment to posts as principals suddenly has become a serious problem throughout the country. It is also an issue of high expectations and low wages. The wages of both teachers and principals are considered low compared to other groups in our society. Salaries for teachers and principals at all levels are centrally negotiated within the framework of general salary regulations for public employees. It is now being considered whether this should be decentralized to lower levels. Both Chief Education Officers, County Directors and Teacher Unions have been concerned about the small number of applicants for principals which are now averaging less than three for each post.

The Ministry of Education is aware of the fact that to obtain a position as principal, has been less attractive. As a result of collective bargaining agreements principals and vice principals have acquired a guaranteed minimum of time outside classroom to do their work as a school leader. Each municipality may decide to allocate more resources to local schools, and some do.

The Study

Methodology

The study is part of a cross-cultural study which investigate the impact of national and local culture on principalship. In each country four heads from public upper secondary schools are interviewed. Gert Hofstede's work on culture and organizations (1980) plays an important part of the theoretical framework, and the rationale and purpose is explained by Paula Cordeiro (1998). The specified framework is also discussed more in detail in the case-study of four Hong Kong principals (Walker, Dimmock and Poon 1998).

Two men and two women, serving as principals in upper secondary schools in and around the Oslo area, were selected for this phase of the study. In selecting respondents, I found it important to include schools which 1) offered both general subjects and vocational training, 2) reflected the «old» system and the «new» system within upper secondary education. Two of the schools, Borgen and Stranda, reflect the «old» system, offering mainly academic subjects. Soltun and Granlien reflect the «new» system and are large comprehensive schools, offering a broad range of subjects, practical and theoretical. Soltun and Borgen are located in Oslo where there is a freedom of choice between schools based on the marks students obtain at lower secondary schools. Granlien and Stranda are located outside Oslo where schools recruit pupils primarily from its local catchment area. All four principals were shadowed for a full day by the

researcher. In addition relevant documents were collected, for instance school development plans, brochures, introductions to new students etc.

Contacts were first made by telephone. I called them, introduced myself and my department and asked if they were willing to participate in the project. All four said yes immediately. Then a formal letter with information about the project was sent. A copy of the interview guide was enclosed to the principals, and all commented that it gave them an opportunity to give some thought to the questions in advance.

Interviews were conducted and lasted an hour and a half. We had no interruptions during the interview. All interviews were tape recorded, and full transcripts were returned to the respondents in order to check for accuracy. One of the principal made minor corrections and small changes for the sake of anonymity.

The Principals and the Schools in the Study

All four principals are belonging to the dominant ethnic group in Norway; White Norwegian. One was born in Sweden but has lived in Norway for many years. All four are married and have children. One of them has also grand children. All of them except one is a member of the Lutheran State Church[4]. All had been deputy heads for years before entering a position as principal. The staff stability is rather high at all schools. Half the staff has been working at the same school for more than 15 years. Teachers teaching general subjects have strong academic backgrounds, and most of the vocational training course teachers have a well-rounded career background from the private sector. The average age of the staff is between 40 and 50. The principals' immediate boss is the County Director. During the last five years the position as County Director is held by a woman in the counties included in the study[5]. In the following description pseudonyms are used for the schools and their principals.

Soltun Upper Secondary School

Soltun was built as a combined, upper secondary school, on Oslo's outskirts. The modern buildings encompass comprehensive study facilities. The student population is 700 at school and 150 trainees attached to the school. There are 90 teachers. The school offers Foundation courses for General and Business studies, Building trades, Health and social studies, Mechanical trades and Technical building trades. Advanced course 1 includes general studies, car mechanics, hair-dressing, carpentry, skin-care and general care. Advanced course 2 includes general studies and skin-care. In addition to this there is the trainee school for building trades and scaffold construction. There are also unemployment courses.

Soltun recruits students primarily from its local catchment area. Although the vocational training course students do tend to come from further afield. 30 % of the students are foreign speakers, which, according to the staff, creates tensions if different cultural groups have conflicting behavioral norms. The school is situated on the city's outskirts, which appears to influence the recruitment of general course students. At present, the city center schools appear to be most attractive to students. There is competition for students among schools, and Soltun

[4] Approximately 85 % of the Norwegian population are members of the Lutheran State Church.
[5] It is quite unusual that women hold this position. Upper secondary schools in Norway still have a predominantly male-controlled administrative hierarchy.

school also having struggle against a negative reputation established by the media. As a result, teachers are working extra hard to encourage students to be proud of their school.

Mr. Sandberg has been a principal at Soltun for three years. He is 44 years old, has a Master Degree of Biology and a Certificate of Education from university (six months pedagogical education). He is married and is member of the Lutheran State Church. He has worked first as a teacher and then as a deputy head at the school since it was opened approximately 20 years ago. The principal before him was forced to leave the school owing to a problematic conflict both between the administration and the staff, and within the administration team.

A Typical Day

Mr. Sandberg usually arrives at his office between 07.00 and 08.00 am. It is difficult to describe a typical day because the tasks differ a lot. Mr. Sandberg may plan a day , but the days rarely turn out the way he has planned. As a matter of fact he never knows what comes from one hour to the next because so much happens at such a big school. Not a single day passes without negative or positive surprises. Mr. Sandberg says this makes his job exciting. Much time is spent on meetings with other leaders, with counselors, with teachers, with the pupils' council, and with union leaders. All these meetings are necessary to keep the school going. Some time is of course spent on administrative paperwork; answering applications, writing reports about different matters, trying to launch new pedagogical ideas.

Then there are pupils' cases, and those can never be planned for. All of a sudden a pupil has done something, and Mr. Sandberg thinks it is important to deal with such cases immediately. One of his deputies has the responsiblity for following up pupil matters, but the most serious cases Mr. Sandberg has chosen to deal with himself.

During the day there are many telephone calls and many questions, but Mr. Sandberg has delegated a lot of his responsibilities. He says: *«When I talk to other principals who haven't started the system we've got here, I think they're left with too many tasks that I think are very trivial for a principal. For instance the principal is watching by the window to see if unwanted persons are coming into the school building, and then runs down to catch them and get them out. I wouldn't care to spend my time on tasks like that. I think it is a mixture of fear of delegating and a lack of people to delegate to.»*

As a principal Mr. Sandberg is responsible for the school's economy and this year the budget is approximately NOK 35 million this year (US$ 4,5 million). This isn't a daily job, it's done in periods. Teachers' salaries count for NOK 25 million (US$ 3,2 million), so there is quite a lot of money left to administrate.

It varies a lot for how long a day at school will last. In periods when there is a lot to do, Mr. Sandberg works12 hours a day. In quieter periods he goes home at four o'clock in the afternoon. Usually he is not bringing any paperwork home. He tries to get the work done at school. He rather stays at the office till nine in the evening than to bring work with him. He often works on Sundays, but Saturdays are devoted to his family.

Authority

The Chief Education Officer at the county level is Mr. Sandberg's superior, and he feels free to express disagreement towards her. However, he would never reveal this disagreement to the staff at school. He says: *«In our leader team at school we sometimes express our disagreement with CEO and discuss it, but that's where the line goes. I do not discuss it with the faculty heads, which perhaps reveals that I have a way to go until I seriously include them in the leader team. I have to be sure that there are no leaks. Loyalty is very important to me, and so it is to my superior.»*

Mr. Sandberg has never felt run over by the CEO. If so, it has been trivial matters of no importance. But he has some hopeless experiences in relation to the politicians. Sometimes he disagrees a lot with the politicians. Their way of steering is often so inconsistent with espoused goals, and it is probably caused by ignorance. For instance, Reform 94 implies quite a lot of problems, and Mr. Sandberg feels that principals' opposition is not taken seriously by the politicians. They are not able to see the reality of the school having such a varied group of students. Nevertheless, his criticism has to go through the official channels through the superintendent. But most important is the relationship with his closest superior, and that is good. He says: *«I think it would have been difficult to have conflicts with them. There would be too many wars to fight.»*

Relationships with Individuals and Groups

Good inter-faculty relations at Soltun school have always been encouraged to avoid divisions and cliques between those who were teaching general subjects and those who were teaching vocational subjects. An awkward conflict arouse a couple of years ago when a quarrel within the administration team led to a rift among the staff. Discrimination and whispering behind closed doors resulted in the head's resignation and the appointment of Mr. Sandberg as a new head. Following this upheaval, it became vital for the school to regain administrative stability and order. The administration is now recognized for its efficient teamwork. There may be squabbles internally, but never externally.

Mr. Sandberg describes himself as consultative and democratic in his decision making style. Before he takes a decision, he will spend much time on thinking through a case, both to get ideas and to listen to other people's view. But when the decision is made , he never wavers. Instead it is important to evaluate the consequences and find a new course if necessary. He says: *«To alter the course all the time because there are new ideas coming up, is not all right. In an organization like ours where so many persons have opinions about everything, I cannot steer the school according to that. There are 90 teachers, and though it doesn't imply 90 different opinions, some of them may have many opinions during one day. It depends at what time you talk to them in the day. I cannot let all these opinions decide how to lead. One has to stick to a decision for the appointed time».*

According to the principal, the majority of teachers will not think he has an autocratic leadership style, but Mr. Sandberg is not sure that all teachers will confront him when they disagree. He experiences that very few express their views at staff meetings, but believes that most of the teachers agree with the decisions if they do not say anything. He is, however, aware that sometimes at staff meetings he might hit a little too quickly back when someone has some critical remarks. But whenever he has been unreasonable, he tries to address the person in question and say he is sorry. He says: *«I should be a little more humble sometimes. My*

deputy heads are good at telling me. If they think my behavior has been unreasonable in situations like that, they're outspoken. But it hasn't happened very often.»

Dealing with Uncertainty and Conflict

Mr. Sandberg seldom feels nervous or stress at work. He loves having many tasks to do, because then the days pass so quickly and there is no risk of getting bored. However, he does not like hanging behind concerning time-limits.

When he has a problem, he usually starts by analyzing it alone, but not for too much time. According to Mr. Sandberg problems should not be left unsolved for too long, because then they become serious. He then discusses the problem with one of his deputy heads or one of the counselors who he feels is especially competent in the specific field. He says: *«When I say that I address persons who are skilled in the field, then I mean persons that I know may have all the counter-arguments. If I'm going to make a decision, then it's important to have all the counter-arguments before and not afterwards. The latter may give an impression of uncertain leadership, if you constantly have to reconsider your decisions because you hear the counter-arguments afterwards.»* Then he introduces the problem to the leader team. Everyone has an opportunity to give their view. Then he makes a decision at the meeting, so that everyone is aware of what decision is taken. That is the pattern. Then of course, a lot of cases have to be discussed formally further on, either with the union leaders, or the representative for the work environment or the Pupils' Council.

On being a male principal

Mr. Sandberg do not think that male or female leadership influences the relationship between the principal and the staff. He cannot see there is any big difference in the view of male or female principals. His superior at the county level is now a woman, and before it was a man. Differences in leadership style is not necessarily connected with gender. According to Mr. Sandberg it is the skills and personal qualities as a leader that are essential in a Norwegian school. But he has experienced differences in views between the majority ethnic group at school and minority groups[6]. Expectations from parents do influence the scope of actions. He says: *«The only example I can hit on is that in relation to some groups of pupils, for instance those belonging to a Moslem environment, it might turn out as a problem to be a woman. We've seen examples of that. We haven't seen it so much on the head level because we're not so much in touch with the pupils, but on the teacher level we see that Moslem boys have a different view of women than is usually found in our society. One might think this was a big problem , but it is smaller than one would expect. But it is there. I have wondered if there are any differences between men and women in their leader role, but I don't think there are. I guess it's an advantage to be a man in relation to Moslem parents. There is an example from many years ago when we had a female principal here, and some Moslems came to talk to the principal. They thought they had been misunderstood when they were shown in to a woman, because the principal had to be a man, of course. They wouldn't accept it. Such things must be frustrating for the one who experiences it. As a man I'm let off such situations.»*

---

[6] Soltun Up. Sec. is the only school within the study which has a large percent students born in foreign countries or with parents from foreign countries.

Mr. Sandberg think it is somewhat important to have sufficient time for his family, but since he has chosen to be a principal, there are some consequences which must be taken. To Mr. Sandberg it is very important to have challenging work to do, to have considerable freedom to adopt his own approach to the job, and to have in-service-training with opportunities to improve and learn new skills. He finds his job extremely interesting and challenging. Physical working conditions are quite important, but not most important.

Borgen Upper Secondary School

Borgen is an old, respected school, which was built as an upper secondary school more than eighty years ago. It is located in Oslo's center. The school's exterior is impressive, but refurbishment is required internally. Borgen offers mainly general subject courses and courses for music, drama and dance. It is very popular, and competition for entry is tough. The student population is 450, age 16-19. On average, the students have extremely good, lower secondary school grades and come from all over Oslo. The school has almost no foreign speaking students. 50 teachers are working at Borgen, and the administration team consists of three deputy heads in addition to the principal. Many of the school's past heads have been described as pioneers of school politics. The instruction of more traditional subjects is deeply rooted, and many believe much of the old Latin school remains.

The present principal, Mrs. Brevik, is 46 years and was appointed two years ago, after having been principal for ten years at a combined upper secondary school, within the same county. She has a Master of Arts in Languages, courses in Business Administration and Management in USA and Norway. She grew up in Sweden and started her university education in Sweden and finished her Master Degree in Norway. She is now a Norwegian citizen. She is married and is member of the Lutheran State Church. She has worked in upper secondary schools for twenty years, but only two years as a teacher. Most of the time she has been a deputy head or a principal. When she returned home after her stay in USA, she was highly motivated for a leadership position in schools. She applied and was appointed as a principal only 36 years old.

A Typical Day

Mrs. Brevik usually arrives at school between 8.00 am and 8.30 am. Some days earlier. Usually she starts by saying hello to her clerks, and then she goes to the staff room to have a chat with the teachers who have arrived. When the school bell is ringing, she always leaves the staff room to show the teachers an example. Mrs. Brevik wants all teachers to go to their classroom immediately when the bell is ringing. She goes back to her office. She always has a plan for the week which give information about meetings, work, or things she knows in advance have to be taken care of. She always gives a copy of the plan to her clerks, and put a list on her door so that people coming to see her during the day will know when it is convenient to drop in without an appointment. Every morning she has a short meeting with one of her deputy heads, just to get information about illness within the staff, if there is any problem which have to be handled immediately. During the week she will arrange for several meetings with the care-taker, the administration team, the faculty heads, union leaders. For instance every Tuesday she meets with the administration team, every Friday she has a talk with the care-taker and with the clerks, once a month a meeting with the faculty heads, and every second week she talks with the student council. In addition she always tries to be there for the students if they need to discuss cases with the principal. If they come to her door, she is ready to organize an ad hoc meeting. When the bell is ringing for a break, she usually goes to the staff room and have

informal chats with her teachers. She did not do that the first months as a principal at this school, but her faculty heads told her that this was important to do in order to be visible as a leader.

Authority

Mrs. Brevik finds it easy to confront her Chief Education Officer (CEO) with priorities she disagrees with. But all disagreements must be explicit before a decision is taken. There is a time for trying to obtain influence, and there is a time for obedience. Afterwards one has to loyal. She demands the same attitude from her staff. Whenever she disagrees, she will also promote and discuss alternative ways of doing things, and she will initiate discussion among her colleagues at other schools within the county. Of course, it is depending on what cases are concerned. She will for instance never deny to work hard in order to realize Reform 94. As a principal she has to be committed to the national curriculum guidelines. If not, she would have to resign from the position.

However, she is dissatisfied with the way her CEO is rewarding hard work. She knows she has done a lot of good work as a principal, but the only feedback she receives from CEO is more difficult problems to resolve. She had to fight to get the job at Borgen, because the CEO wanted her to take a position at a school with huge conflicts among the staff and within the administration team. She does not think it is right to reward the best people by always giving them the most difficult tasks. As a matter of fact, in doing that one rewards those who do not work hard by giving them easy tasks. The same case may be transferred to the school level. There are always some selfish teachers who will try to 'grab' the best students and get a favorable timetable for themselves, but then I confront them with the collegial perspective. There has to be a just distribution of work, and it is important to take care of the good teachers in order to keep them at school.

An new work-time agreement, which became effective from the 1st January 1994, requires the teachers to work 190 scheduled school hours per year, exclusive of their normal teaching hours. This agreement should assist the head in organizing professional staff collaboration. The principal at Borgen has chosen not to draw up individual written agreements. The head feels the attention given to the number of hours is an unfortunate aspect of the work-time agreement. She is more in favor of the tasks in hand. If people are motivated by the task, they use the time required to see it completed. A strict handling of the agreement leads to time keeping in a negative fashion. She does not want to encourage that. However, she has said that if a teacher wishes a written agreement, they may have one. So far, no-one has asked for one. According to the head, the positive aspect of the work-time agreement is that one is able to make demands for meeting, collaborative planning and evaluation of teaching.

Relationships with Individuals and Groups

Mrs. Brevik describes her leadership style as leading by example for creating exemplary standards of practice. She thinks her vision and expectations are exemplified more through actions rather than words. She tries to be fair in her relationship with the staff. Most of the teachers at Borgen have, like their principal a Master degree from university. Among the staff there is a division for a long time, and it is clearly portrayed in the staff room. The science teachers gather round the center table, and the arts teachers sit around a large round table. Different subject groups have gone through phases of dominance, and over the last decade that

position has been held by the science section. The principal received information about this division within the staff when she came to the school, and she has tried to find ways of changing power relations within the school in a more constructive direction by «walking the talk» (cf. Fernandez 1997). Mrs. Brevik has a lot of courage and optimism, and is not afraid of communicating her decisions.

Mrs. Brevik describes her decision making style as consultative and democratic. However, it is depending on the case. If she, for instance, thinks there must be alternative ways of handling a mandate from the Ministry, she will ask for advice, but at the same time she will be decisive on for how long time she will allow discussion on the issue. Before she opens up for discussion she will know a lot about what is possible to do within existing frames, and she will always discuss cases within the leader group before including the staff. It is important to know the views of her deputy heads before discussing with the teachers. Outwardly they have to act as a team. She says: *There were some problems with one of my deputy heads in the beginning, and I had to emphasize her leadership position several times because she was often disagreed after the decision was taken, and some teachers took advantage of this. Every time that happened, I asked her to go back to the teachers and clear up the controversy she had created by acting the way she did. It helped.*

The principal at Borgen school comments that she probably feels more secure as a person compared to the majority of principals. Sometimes she thinks principals are treated like a door mat by their teachers. The teachers as a group may influence school culture a lot, and some principals try to meet their expectations by always acting in favor of them as a group. According to Mrs. Brevik this is wrong. Actions of teachers are not always based on altruistic behavior. Principals should be aware of that.

On Being a Female Principal

Mrs. Brevik has never experienced problems connected to being a female principal. According to her opinion, male and female principals are equal in Norwegian schools. Neither principal colleagues, teachers nor students have reacted hostile or negative with reference to her being a woman. It is the kind of work you do, which is most important. She says: *I was a very young woman when I first accepted a job as a principal in Oslo, and ten years ago the group of principals at upper secondary schools were absolutely male-dominated. I experienced colleagues who expected me to do a good job, and they wanted to collaborate. At school I do not think teachers or students reflect on me being a woman or a man. I am their principal, and I do not work differently with male and female colleagues. At least, not as far as I know. As you have noticed, our administration team consists of four women. Because of that, the school wanted a man as their new principal. However, I was better qualified and more experienced and got the job. They never commented on that after I arrived.*

It has become more and more important to have a job which leaves sufficient time for her personal and family life. Ten years ago her job was a lot more important. It probably had something to do with surrounding it with prestige. Now she is more relaxed. However, it is very important to have challenging work to do.

Dealing with Uncertainty and Conflict

The principal says she always start by reflecting carefully on the case when she has a problem or is involved in a conflict. She will try to sort out how she could have contributed to the situation, and what other people have done. She is aware of how micropolitics often will be included in a conflict, either because she has withdrawn privileges from someone, or she could have behaved in a way that hurt people. Then she will ask her deputy heads for advice, because it is so important they as leaders are able to agree on how to manage a conflict. Else teachers probably will take personal advantages of the situation. Mrs. Brevik knows she is able to analyze a case from different perspectives, and she is able to ask for apologies if she realizes that she was the one who has acted badly. She will never wait too long to deal with conflicts, and will confront people when it is necessary. At the same time she has learned by experience that in some cases it is important to wait for a couple of days before one confronts people.

Mrs. Brevik seldom feels stressed at work. She has learned a lot of managing stress and coping with dilemmas during her years as principal.

Granlien Upper Secondary School

Granlien Upper Secondary School has a structure similar to Soltun. It was built approximately 20 years ago, has modern buildings, and is offering a broad range of subjects, practical as well as theoretical. It is located outside Oslo, and it recruits students primarily form its local catchment area. The student population is 750, age 16-19, and 150 trainees are attached to the school. The school differs from Soltun when it comes to students on roll. Very few students at Granlien are foreign speaking. Students' social and economic background are mixed, but a small majority has parents with higher educational background or parents who work as artists. The school offers Foundation and Advanced courses for General and Business studies, Health and social studies, Electrical Trades, Arts, Crafts and Design. 105 teachers are working at Granlien.

Like at Soltun, there was a serious conflict between the principal and the staff some years ago. A new principal was appointed, and good relationship was reestablished. After a couple of years he applied for another position and left the school. Mr. Gran, who is 40 years old, is now the principal at post, and he was appointed two years ago. Before he had been a consultant at regional level, a deputy head for 7 years and a teacher for 3 years.

A Typical Day

The days vary a lot. Usually Mr. Gran arrives at 8.00 am and returns home at 4.30 pm and on average he works 40-45 hours a week[7]. He knows several colleagues who work more than 60 hours a week, but he has decided he does not want to be worn out before he is 45. According to Mr. Gran this is a question of delegation and trust in colleagues. He does not think it is necessary to control everything, but one should be aware of what and how much one delegates. He gives priority to educational leadership. Those cases connected with school development, he would not delegate, but stay in charge. His door is always open, but his staff knows to whom he has delegated authority, so they do not interrupt if it is not absolutely necessary. He seldom finds time to stay at the staff room with his teachers. He knows some are dissatisfied owing to that, and it is a problem which so far has not come to any solution. He says: *I do not like to be away from school, but I am frequently faced with irreconcilable*

[7] 37 ½ hours a week are normal in Norway.

expectations from different parts, and I also have to take care of collaboration with other principals and the CEO office. It is impossible to satisfy everyone all the time

He describes a typical day with reference to last Tuesday: *«I arrived at 8.00 am and considered it was necessary to phone the office of the Chief Education Officer in order to get some help with the school's computer system. After doing some paperwork, I had a meeting with a student who had failed to buy books and other school equipment for four month. His teacher had given in and sent the student to me. It was a rather easy case to handle. Then there was a staff meeting where I gave some information and introduced an Irish student who had been hired at our school to take care of some teaching in English. I went back to my office and worked with the school plan I am going to present to the staff next week. I had a meeting with one of the deputy heads and I wrote a report to the CEO about the school. We have just examined the students' perceptions about our evaluation practice at school, and I prepared a paper for the teachers listing possible consequences of the students' answers. A teacher called me and told that she suspected that one of her students had used drug, and we discussed how we should handle the situation. I used a lot of time on that case the rest of the day.*

Shadowing Mr. Gran on Friday the same week confirmed this description.

Authority

Up till now, Mr. Gran as a whole supports the education policy outlined by the regional level. When he disagrees with decisions made by the CEO-office, he would tell them. He has earlier worked as a consultant at this office, and finds it easy to confront when he disagrees. For instance, recently there was a case where several principal disagreed with criteria used for distributing money within the county. However, he has noticed that he often make a phone to the Assistant Chief Education Officer. Before he started in his new job as a principal, he had expected that the Chief Education Officer would trace and keep pace with what is happening at school sites, and give more priority to personal and informal contact with the principals within the county, than she does. He is a bit disappointed to experience that this is not the case, but so far he has not told her.

Relationships with Individuals and Groups

Mr. Gran describes himself as a democratic leader. He will ask for advice before taking a decision and he will listen to objections. He is, however, aware that sometimes he is a bit impatient when taking decisions, but he finds it easy to reconsider a decision if he realizes his colleagues are right in their criticism. At the same time he does not want to be perceived as a wavering leader. Collaboration with the union is regulated by law and is unproblematic to handle.

He is sure that most teachers and students will object if they disagree with him, but of course it will vary from person to person. He has relations with the student council, and he always encourages the students to make their opinions and critique explicit. Reflecting on the relationship within the leadership team, he realizes that the male deputy heads more often confront him compared to the female deputy heads, but he does not know why this is the case.

Dealing with Uncertainty and Conflict

During the two years Mr. Gran has been a principal at Granlien, he has experienced few conflicts. But if he is confronted with a serious problem, he will usually need some time to reflect for himself. Then he will ask one of his deputy heads for advice. Whom it will be, is depending on the case. Twice a week he will meet with all his deputy heads. However, there are cases he prefers to start the analysis with principal colleagues from other schools. For instance sometimes his deputy heads are part of the conflict at hand. Then it is useful to listen to reflections from other colleagues. They will have the necessary distance to the problem.

He does not feel nervous at work, but he knows that some of his colleagues will describe him as impatient. He says: *Maybe I am too strict on deadlines. I like to get the work done fast, and I want the people around me to be efficient.* He can understand that students break the rules once in a while, but he will not accept the same attitudes from teachers. It teachers break rules, he will confront them, first in a gentle way. Usually a small private comment is enough, because they will be embarrassed.

On Being a Male Principal

The principal at Granlien finds it difficult to reflect on how it is to be a male principal, because he does not know how it is to be a female principal. He says: *I have never reflected on the fact that our administration team consists of two women and four men. Maybe women react in another way that men do in a leadership position, but I am not so sure about that. ... I think you will find as much differences within the group of women as between women and men.»*

Mr. Gran thinks it quite important to have sufficient time for his family life. He has two boys of the age of nine and twelve, and his children must be given priority. As a matter of fact, it is an advantage not to be involved in your job 24 hours a day. One needs time to relax and do something else. At the same time it is very important to have challenging work to do, work from which he can achieve a personal sense of accomplishment. This is why he chose to become a principal. He wants a job where he can fully use his skills and abilities. He also thinks it is quite important to have good physical working conditions. His office must be neat and clean, and if he discovers some tagging on the walls, he will immediately ask the caretaker to remove it.

Stranda Upper Secondary School

Stranda school can be compared to Borgen. However, the entry is not as tough as at Borgen, because pupils do not have a freedom of choice among schools in this county. Most of the students live close to the school, and it is a homogeneous ethnic group. Less than 5 % are foreign speakers. And within this group most will come from Sweden, Finland, or United States. Very few students come from Asia or Africa. It is an old school located in a wealthy area outside Oslo, and economical background is very good. The school offers mainly Foundation courses for general studies, but three years ago they started a new course within agriculture, fishing and forestry. The student population is 520, and there are 60 teachers working at the school. The turn over is low, and most of the staff has been at school for many years and lives in the neighborhood . These facts make a strong impact on school culture. Some of the teachers started even as a student at Stranda and came back as a teacher.

The principal, Mrs. Skar, is 63 years, has a Master of Arts in languages, and was appointed at Stranda Upper secondary school ten years ago. Before that she has worked as a teacher and deputy head for many years at another upper secondary school within the same county, and she has also had a central position within the teacher union and played a central role in outlining the educational policy at state level. She has two grandchildren and belong to the Lutheran State church. A while ago she was elected as a politician in the local community for four years, and that was a very important experience. She learned a lot about political decision- and policy making, which has been very useful in her job as a principal

A Typical Day

Mrs. Skar does not think it is possible to describe a typical day at school. There is no such thing as a typical day. The days vary so much. There are of course some fixed meetings every week. For instance the leadership team will meet every day except Wednesday. Once a week the team will meet the faculty heads, who are in charge of pedagogical affairs and have the task of coordinating teaching and ensuring directives are followed. They also prepare local curricula, internal examination papers and oversee budgets and teaching materials. So far personnel responsibility is not part of the position as faculty heads, but the principal hope to develop this position to include such a responsibility. Every Monday and Thursday the principal, deputy heads or faculty heads will give information to the staff during the long break at noon. Every Tuesday the leadership will arrange for meetings with team of teachers depending on what cases are at hand.

Authority

As a whole Mrs. Skar agrees with the Chief Education Officer when it comes to educational policy, and that makes collaboration easy. For instance, Mrs. Skar is very committed to Reform 94, and she welcomed the changes connected to the reform. As a matter of fact, she does not think one should continue as a principal at upper secondary school if one disagrees with the reform. If she had been in a situation like that, she would quit as a principal.

Of course there are cases when political decisions interfere with the priorities taken at her school, but her practice as a local politician, has also given Mrs. Skar a more pragmatic view on the tension between professional and political level. She says: *It is not a big deal. When you have decided to work within a system governed by politicians, you have to handle initiatives from them as well, particularly when it is an election year. Several attempts will interfere with our priorities, but nevertheless; you have to manage it.* She admitted however that the tension between the professional and the political level has become more distinct the last years, and her school, located outside Oslo, has not been influenced by this new system of free choice.

Relationships with Individuals and Groups

The principal at Stranda does not want to be an autocratic leader, and she does not think she is. She describes herself as consultative, but also decisive. She says, however, that if one of the eldest teachers at school had been asked to describe her leadership style, they would probably say she is not democratic, because she does interfere with what is going on in classroom. For a long time these teachers has had individual autonomy, but to continue fighting for one's individual right to set one's own standards for teaching does not, according to Mrs. Skar, correspond with the conditions of professionalism. It is not the individual who is awarded

autonomy, but the profession. It is a challenge to change a culture of individual autonomy in schools and obtain more acceptance of leadership. The academic tradition is connected to endless discussions.

The school has established procedures for decision making which also include collaboration with the local leader, but Mrs. Skar is not satisfied with the way they collaborate right now. She tries to involve the teachers in decision-making by established discussion groups whenever there is an important issue at hand. By doing that, everyone has an opportunity to get their voice. But of course, some teachers will always be complaining that they do not have a voice. It has also been rather effective to initiate informal discussions about different cases, and she tries to attend the staff room pretty often to have a chat with teachers when they have a break between lessons. She is sure that the teachers at Stranda will be explicit whenever they disagree. The students and the parents are also outspoken, and as a whole their criticism is very constructive. Mrs. Skar says: *Some teachers have commented that the leadership team listen too much to the complaints and comments of students, but we have a superb student council at school, and they behave in a correct way when they criticize what is going on at school. As a matter of fact, the students compete to be elected for the student council, and after election they will receive education in decision making procedures.*

Mrs. Skar is very proud of the way the student council is working. These students have initiated several projects in order to improve the relationships at school, and to prevent bad behavior among their fellow students.

Dealing with Uncertainty and Conflict

If Mrs. Skar has a problem or is confronted by a conflict, she always reflects carefully before acting. She trusts her leadership team, and now she seldom handles conflicts alone. She used to do that before, but now she realizes how important it is to obtain support in your way of dealing with uncertainty and conflict. From whom she will seek advice, is depending on the case. It is very important to include the leadership team in difficult cases. Those should not be handled alone.

According to Mrs. Skar it is a big problem when some teachers may go on for years listening to the same complaints from students and parents, without improving their performance. As their superior one should not wait and hope for better days. One has to confront the teachers. Generally she finds it very difficult to deal with under-performing teachers, because it is almost impossible to terminate a teacher's contract unless they are proven guilty of illegal activities. The latter requires a formal procedure. She had just ended a case which she had been working on for years. She said: *It took me more than five years to follow the formal process which was required. You need documentation and proofs. Another problem is that colleagues may feel sorry for the person and in a way support or protect him or her, which makes it difficult to get hold of the necessary proofs. That happened at our school.*

There are days when Mrs. Skar feels nervous at work. Particularly when she is preparing for a huge meeting with parents. She wants the meeting to be a success because so many people are involved. But she does not think anyone has discovered her stress, because she is always calm when the meeting begins. Another stress factor is initiation of projects she knows the teachers will object.

The principal at Stranda answers my question related to gender issues in this way: *«It is not a relevant question within a Norwegian context. I guess you will find differences between countries on this issues. However as a politician I have experienced on some occasions power strategies from men, but I would not put emphasis on that. It just give me a picture about how relationships between men and women may be in other occupations. It includes how men tend to dominate discussions. But within schools I have never experienced it.»*

In other words, women might run into problems as a leader in other contexts, but according to Mrs. Skar, the leader role in schools are not influenced by one's sex. She has never experienced any difficulties because she is a women, and she does not think there is any big difference in the view of male or female principals.

When asked how important it is for her to have sufficient time for her personal and family life, Mrs. Skar finds it difficult to answer. She says: *In one way it is very important to have a job which leaves me sufficient time for my family life. I also have a husband who gives me lots of support. On the other hand, I know I have chosen to do things which means I have sacrificed my family life. Things do not always turn out to be what you wanted them to be. Sometimes you just have to give your job priority. My espoused theories indicates the answer «very important». My «theories-in-use» implicit in my patterns of behavior, are sometimes quite different.* It is very important to her to have challenging work to do. Physical conditions are somewhat important, but her office does not have to be beautifully decorated.

Discussion

The description of leadership within a Norwegian context given in this article, is based on interviews with four principals. The data does not allow for generalization, and thus the analysis does not claim that this is a typical way of understanding leadership at Norwegian schools as a whole. The following analysis, based on Hofstede's (1990) four cultural dimensions, is only identifying possible cultural influences on the roles of four principals for the purpose of comparison with similar groups from other countries.

Relationships with Authority

As shown in figure 2 in the first part of this article, the counties are responsible for building and running the upper secondary schools. Thus, the county director is the boss of principals in upper secondary schools, and principals at school sites have to send a yearly report about the activities at school to the director. In both counties involved in this study, a woman is boss and is at the top post in educational administration.

All four principal in this study say they have good relationships with the county level, and this makes it easy to be loyal to the superior. They have never felt run over. If so, it has been trivial matters of no importance. They feel free to disagree with their superior face to face, but they will never reveal disagreement with the county director to the staff at school. Their criticism is to go through the official channels. They look upon themselves as middle-managers within the school bureaucracy as well as professional leaders. To be steered by the County Director and the Ministry of Education, Research and Church Affairs is what one has to put up with as a democrat. Loyalty to their superiors seems to be very important, and it seems to be important

to have close contact with their director. Two of the principals commented that they had hoped for more rewards from county level when they were doing a good job. This issue, had, however, not been discussed openly.

What bothers the principals from Oslo is more the relationship with political level. As one principal puts it: « I feel that schools sometimes are being over-steered by the politicians, which simply is caused by ignorance». There has, for instance, been tensions between the professional level and the political level after the local right wing government has given students freedom of choice among schools within Oslo. The politicians claim that this increases quality in school. Principals and teachers claim that this contributes to labeling the most popular schools as A-schools whereas the other schools are labeled as B-schools. Formerly there was a system where a certain percentage of the pupils were entitled to go to school in their local environment[8]. That meant a more heterogeneous recruitment of students. However, the arguments about a more heterogeneous recruitment's are only part of the truth, because the resident areas differ a lot in and around Oslo. If the school is located in a wealthy area, like Stranda school, for instance, then most of the students will have parents with high income. But the principal of Soltun is right when he says: *Within the old system, we could have very bright students within general subjects classes. Now these students are competing for a place at the most popular down-town schools.*

All four principals say they are very committed to implement the new national curriculum guidelines, Reform 94. They all see this as an essential prerequisite of staying in their position as principal. They welcome the reform and work hard in order to motivate their teachers. I quote Mrs. Skar, the principal at Stranda: *My boss and I have the same view on schooling, on learning issues etc., and it is stated in our new curriculum guidelines. That is why it is not a problem for me to implement this reform. We may disagree on minor things and on how fast we will achieve our goals, but never on the big issues. If that had been the case, I would retire from my position as principal.*

Hofstede's dimension «Relationships with Authority» refers to the distribution of power within society and its organizations. It concerns how the less powerful members perceive and cope with inequalities of power distributions (cf. Cordeiro 1998, Walker et.al. 1998). Within this framework the Norwegian society could be described by low Power distance (PD) values. As mentioned in the first part of this article, one of the main principles of compulsory education is participation and 'learning by doing' which means encouraging students to be active in school planning and in the life of the local community. It is common that parents will encourage children to have a will of their own, and student-centered methods are used in schools. As a rule, teachers enjoy less respect nowadays; they have to negotiate their legitimacy as a leader in class. So is also the case to some degrees when it comes to the relationship between principals and teachers.

But at the same time there exists a strong norm of loyalty within the system. Both principals and teachers act as faithful servants within a bureaucratic school system. This has been the case for a long time with Norwegian school history. It is also true that it has been a strong norm of noninterference in the teacher's classroom activities, even though schools have worked to a fairly detailed national curriculum guidelines in terms of timetable and syllabus. During the

[8] Granlien and Stranda are localized in a county in which most students are entitled to go to school in their local environment. They only choose between general subjects courses or vocational courses.

seventies it was correct to talk about bottom-up strategies in school development. Today it is seen to come from above. It seems to be a strong belief in top-down strategies in order to improve schools. Politicians and educational bureaucrats are interested in regulating classroom activities, and teacher autonomy is under attack from all fronts. A gap between administration and teaching is emphasized in public debate.

Concepts of Masculinity and Femininity

None of the four principals found questions related to concepts of masculinity and femininity relevant. These answers are coherent with an ideal of neutrality, harmony and equality in Norwegian schools. Gender equity has been an aim in educational policy for many years, and school principals live in this rhetorical universe which probably frames their understandings of their construction of gender identities. Upper Secondary Schools in Norway have a gender balance in the ranks of teachers, but they still have a predominantly male-controlled administrative hierarchy. During the 1980s and 1990s the number of women in top posts at school level have increased, but it is still low. For instance in Oslo there are 73 % male principals and 27 % female principals in upper secondary schools. The gender balance is slightly better in Akershus county, in which there are 66 % male principals and 34 % female principals, but in Norway as a whole there are 76 % male principals and 24 % female principals. However if one includes deputy heads the picture will be different.

Within the Norwegian society as a whole, women are receiving lower wages on average, the top jobs in private sector are mostly held by men, and the occupational structure is to a large degree still segregated by sex, the same pattern as in other Western countries (cf. Riel and Lee 1996). Nevertheless, a concept such as sexism seems not to exist in the school rhetoric. It is true that more women have achieved top posts in politics, but research on gender and politics shows that differences between women as a group have increased (Holter 1997). Educated, middle and upper class, white women have gained more equal access to positions of power and careers, leaving other groups of women behind. One might find stereotyped belief that there are some differences in leadership style between male and female principals, but the four principals in the study question if this is the case in schools.

Although male and female principals often will be met by different expectations, their understanding of leadership seems to a large degree to be framed by mainstream discourse of managerial efficiency and economic rationality, when it comes to strategies for change. A key management concept for the 1990s is for instance total quality management and quality assurance, and stem from economic theory rather than educational theory. At county level further education courses for school administrators are often based upon these general management and administration strategies used in the private sector. New visions of school administration incorporate values such as empathy and interpersonal skills, but use these to further the goals of the organization, not necessarily to enhance the conditions of workers (cf. Blackmore 1996). As Røvik (1992 & 1998) points out, in his report about modernization within the public sector, the same solutions are applied in both public and private sectors, and in large and small companies. If an organization is to prove its worth, it must be seen to incorporate the latest administrative strategies, and both women's and men's understandings of principalship are framed by this discourse. The analysis Blackmore (1996) gives within an Australian context: *For the few* [women] *who gain access, this discourse has not provided them with a sophisticated understanding of their political relationship to other women as a collective group,* could be true also within a Norwegian context.

Thus, it is difficult to relate this discussion to Hofstede's dimension «masculinity versus femininity» because to compare women's values with men's values takes for granted that women as a group to a large degree share the same values. Within a political context where schooling in modern capitalism probably is destined to be unequal, solidarity with less privileged groups as a central value of society, seems to disintegrate. As stated above, differences between women within the Norwegian context have increased, and women's access to leadership position seems to be restricted to some groups of women. The interviews with the four principals in this study show no differences between males and females' statements when it comes to leadership styles, emphasis on care and democratic practice in their leadership practice, and both men and women wish to give their personal and family life priority. However their job does not always allow that. All four emphasize that it is very important to have challenging work to do, a work from which they can achieve a personal sense of accomplishment. That is why they applied for principalship. For two of the principals, one woman and one man, it is decisive to have a considerable freedom to adopt their own approach to the job, because it is almost the only rewarding thing. It compensates for low wages. According to them there were no differences in how they treated male and female staff, students or parents. To them gender seemed irrelevant. In stead they emphasized personality and educational background as key variables.

Dealing with Uncertainty and Conflict

The dimension «Uncertainty avoidance» indicates the extent to which people in a society are culturally programmed to feel either comfortable or uncomfortable in unstructured situations (cf. Walker 1998). A common feature among the respondents when they are confronted with conflicts, is to start reflecting carefully on the case. Often they will first think it over alone, but very soon they will seek advise from their deputy heads. Whom they will ask, is depending on the nature of the case. They are all praising the administration team which seems to function very well at all four schools. They are collaborating with people they trust. All four principals seem to have strong personalities, they are visible and they are not afraid of dealing with conflicts. And they know it is important to include union leaders in serious conflict matters, and this is important within the Norwegian context where unions are rather strong. Individual personality and biography will probably influence the way they frame problems as well as national culture and the history of the local school. Within Norwegian schools we will find principals who are tolerant of a range of different opinions, who prefer fewer rather than more rules, as well as principals who tend to be more emotional and motivated by inner nervous energy (cf. Moxnes 1989).

The four principals say they seldom feel stress at work, a surprising statement given a context when recruitment to posts as principals has become a serious problem throughout the country. The most difficult cases are the ones dealing with students' or parents' complaints on under-performing teachers. But the principals say they have learned how to handle stress, and they are not stressed by having many tasks to do. On the contrary, they love it. Probably is their understanding of good leadership to a large degree framed by mainstream discourse of managerial efficiency, and this discourse is not restricted to a Norwegian society. It is influenced by a global discourse of educational leadership and administration which seems highly dominated by research within an American context.

Relationships with Individuals and Groups

The issue is concerned with the extent to which individual principals are integrated into groups and how close their relationships are with colleagues. All four principals describe themselves as consultative and democratic in their decision making style. This is part of what is expected within a Norwegian school. They ask colleagues for advice, and they listen to different views before deciding. Often they will invite people they know think differently to elaborate on a case. They arrange for scheduled staff meetings, they listen to the Pupil's Council, and they negotiate with the unions' representatives. To be a dictator or an autocratic leader in a Norwegian school will simply not work. You have to collaborate with teachers in order to get the job done, and three of four think their own decision making style describes the majority of principals in this country. Only Mrs. Brevik, the principal at Borgen, looks upon herself as more assertive than most principals, but her view has a lot in common with the other principals in the study. The principal at Soltun school underlines the importance of not wavering after a decision have been made. One must go for a decision in an estimated period of time and then evaluate the consequences. It is not always right to alter the course the moment new ideas are coming up. According to him, particularly teachers who are teaching general subjects are used to endless discussion, and they do protect their individual autonomy.

One of the principals emphasized that I would probably get another answer if I had asked the teachers at her school, because teachers have been accustomed to extensive autonomy in their job. More collaborative work is required at school according to Reform 94, but to change a culture of «privacy» in teaching requires a long term strategy. The principals are certainly aware of all the ways teachers may resist steering (cf. Ball 1987, Blase 1989).

Three of the principals emphasize explicitly their good relationships with pupils, and that is something which really motivates them as a leader. Some times they experience that pupils are more honest and more direct in their communication than their teachers. They are also willing to stand on pupil's side in a conflict with a teacher if they agree with the pupil in the case. The principal at Stranda told that the teachers sometimes accused the administration team to be too willing to listening to the pupils. According to her, the pupils are handling cases in a professional way.

In a collectivist society, Hofstede argues, people will place group-goals above their personal goals, relationship will prevail over task, and employer-employee relationships will have a moral base. The opposite evidences will be found in an individualistic society. Examining the statements from the four principals in this study, reveals that both relationships and task orientations are considered equally important, loyalty to superiors is conceived as a moral base, harmony is to a large degree emphasized, and collaboration and collegiality are celebrated and often connected to professionalism. A rhetoric about teamworking and shared responsibility are predominantly, and the principals attempt to unite their teachers behind a common purpose for the school. The principals in this study express that they applied for a leadership position because they wanted to have an influence on the development of the school. They all see changing a culture of «privacy» in teaching into a more collaborative culture as an enormous challenge. According to the principals, all four schools display a combination of individualism and voluntary collaboration.

As mentioned in the first part of this article, solidarity, integration of students with special needs and participation have been main principles of compulsory education in Norway for a long time. Equal access to education has been seen as a democratic right for the individual as

well as a tool for making the society more democratic collectively (Tjeldvoll 1997). There are, however, evidences which show that Norway is moving towards a more individualistic society. The last 15 years people have been driven more by obligations to the self, than a strong obligations to the society. The model of the welfare state is under attack, and in the future we will see more privatization and individual responsibility and accountability will become more central. However, the situation nowadays is very complex, and can neither be explained as individualistic nor collectivist.

Conclusions

The description of principalship given in this article, may only provide and highlight some aspects of how some principals frame their leadership role in an upper secondary school in Norway. The principals' answers are coherent with an ideal of neutrality, harmony and equality in Norwegian schools. The schools are different, and so are the challenges, but their ways of dealing with uncertainty and conflicts, their relationships with authorities, and with individuals and groups are very similar. Within these four Norwegian schools there does not seem to be the traditional dichotomy between men's public lives and women's private lives. Both men and women displayed discipline, authority, and rationality as administrators.

The analysis in this article shows how difficult it is to attribute impacts on principalship to national culture. Culture is not a static variable. On the contrary, cultural contexts are changing rapidly, and the differences between the schools, for instance history, location, student recruitment etc., suggests that many factors are at play in creating school cultures. Such factors might be the teachers' and principals' common pedagogical training, there is the practical organization of the school day, with subjects being divided into lessons and minutes, and students into classes, and principals' way of conducting leadership could well be due to factors like individual personality, educational background, economic conditions, staff relations at the particular school and student recruitment. In addition their understanding of good leadership seems to a large degree to be framed by mainstream discourse of managerial efficiency and economic rationality. This discourse is not restricted to a Norwegian society, but is also influenced by a global discourse of educational leadership and administration which seems highly dominated by research within an American context.

References

Ball, S.J. (1987): *The Micro-politics of the School. Towards a theory of school organization.* Methuen & Co. Ltd.

Blackmore, J. (1996): 'Breaking the Silence': Feminist Contributions to Educational Administration and Policy. In: K. Leithwood, J. Chapman, D. Corson, P. Hallinger and A.Hart (ed): *International Handbook of Educational Leadership and Administration.* Book 2 (pp 997-1043). Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Blase, J. (1989): The teachers' political orientation vis-à-vis the principal: the micropolitics of the school. Hannaway, J. & Crowson, R. (ed): *The Politics of Reforming School Administration.* London: The Falmer Press.

Cordeiro, P. (1998): A Cross-Cultural Study of the Principalship: The Impact of National and Local Culture. Paper presented at AERA, San Diego April 13-17, 1998

Hargreaves, A. (1991): Restructuring restructuring. Postmodernity and the prospect for educational change. Paper presented at AERA, Chicago, April.

23 BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Hofstede, G. (1991): *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the mind.* London: McGraw-Hill

Holter, H. (1997): Om kjønn og politikk (Gender and Politics) & Kjønn, politikk og kvinneundertrykking (Gender, Politics and Subjection of Women).: H.Holter et.al (ed): *Hun og han. Kjønn i forskning og politikk. (He and She. Gender in Research and Politics).* Oslo: Pax Forlag a/s.

Karlsen, G. (1993): *Desentralisering - løsning eller oppløsning?* Oslo: Ad Notam Gyldendal.

KUF (1994):*The Development of Education 1992-94, Norway. National Report.* The Royal Ministry of Education, Research and Church Affairs.

KUF (1996): *Skuleleiing mot år 2000. (Educational Leadership towards year 2000).* The Royal Ministry of Education, Research and Church Affairs.

KUF (1990-91): Parliamentary Report No. 37: *On Organization and Guidance in the Educational Sector.* The Royal Ministry of Education, Research and Church Affairs.

Lauglo, J. (1990): A comparative perspective with special reference to Norway. In: Granheim, M., Kogan, M. & Lundgren, U. (ed.): *Evaluation as Policymaking. Introducing Evaluation into a National Decentralised Educational System.* London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Lauglo, J. (1997): Populism and Education in Norway. In: A. Tjeldvoll (ed): *Education and the Welfare State in the Year 2000. Equality, Policy and Reform in Scandinavia.* New York: Garland Publishing, Inc.

Lundgren, U. (1990): Educational policy-making, decentralisation and evaluation. In: Granheim, M., Kogan, M. & Lundgren, U. (ed.): *Evaluation as Policymaking. Introducing Evaluation into a National Decentralised Educational System.* London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Moxnes, P. (1989): *Hverdagens angst i individ, gruppe og organisasjon.* Paul Moxnes Forlag.

Riel, C. and Lee, V.E: Gender, Organizations, and Leadership. In: K. Leithwood, J. Chapman, D. Corson, P. Hallinger and A.Hart (ed): *International Handbook of Educational Leadership and Administration.* Book 2 (pp 997-1043). Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Røvik, K.A. (1992): *Den "syke" stat. Myter og moter i omstillingsarbeidet.* Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.

Røvik, K.A. (1998): *Moderne organisasjoner. Trender i organisasjonstenkningen ved tusenårsskiftet.* Bergen: Fagbokforlaget

Tjeldvoll, A. (1997): Quality of Equality? Scandinavian Education Towards the Year 2000. In: A. Tjeldvoll (ed): *Education and the Welfare State in the Year 2000. Equality, Policy and Reform in Scandinavia.* New York: Garland Publishing, Inc.

Walker, A., Dimmock, C. and Poon, A. (1998): Accounting for Culture in the Principalship: A Case Study of Four Hong Kong Principals. Paper presented at AERA, San Diego, April 13-17, 1998

Weiler, H.N. (1990): Decentralisation in educational governance: an exercise in contradiction? In: Granheim, M., Kogan, M. & Lundgren, U. (ed.): *Evaluation as Policymaking. Introducing Evaluation into a National Decentralised Educational System.* London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.